

Message Text

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ORIGIN NEA-12

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FM SECSTATE WASHDC

TO AMEMBASSY SANAA PRIORITY

INFO AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY TRIPOLI

S E C R E T STATE 218198

E.O.: 11652: GDS

TAGS: CPAS PFOR YE LY UK

SUBJ: ARABIC IN PASSPORTS

1. UK EMBOFF REEVE, ACTING ON INSTRUCTIONS WHICH ALSO SENT TO SANAA, QUERIED ARP NOV. 5 REGARDING CIRCULAR NOTE VERBALE UK EMB SANAA RECEIVED FROM YARG FOREIGN MINISTRY OCT 25 STATING THAT AS A MEASURE OF RECIPROCITY HOLDERS OF FOREIGN PASSPORTS NOT CONTAINING THE HOLDER'S PERSONAL DETAILS IN ARABIC WILL NOT BE PERMITTED ENTRY INTO YAR. FCO HAS INSTRUCTED UK EMBASSY NOT TO REPLY TO NOTE, BUT TO ASCERTAIN WHETHER NOTE SENT TO US, FRENCH, FRG, ITALIAN AND DUTCH EMBASSIES IN SANAA AND IF SO WHAT THEIR RESPONSES LIKELY TO BE. FCO THINKING IS THAT JOINT APPROACH WOULD BE BEST. SUBJECT TO OTHER COUNTRIES VIEWS, FCO CONSIDERING RESPONDING TO YARG ALONG FOLLOWING LINES: A) REQUIREMENT FOR PERSONAL DETAILS IN ARABIC GOES AGAINST INTERNATIONAL PRACTICE, AND SPECIFICALLY CONTRARY TO RESOLUTION OF 1963 ROME INTERNATIONAL SECRET

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CONFERENCE ON TOURISM AND TRAVEL WHICH STATES THATQUOTE

PASSPORTS SHOULD BE IN THE LANGUAGE OF THE COUNTRY OF
ISSUE...WITH SECOND LANGUAGE ENGLISH OR FRENCH UNQUOTE;
B) HMG HOPES YARG WILL RECONSIDER OCT. 25 NOTE VERBALE;
C) PENDING A YARG RESPONSE, HMG HOPES THAT NO STEPS WILL
BE TAKEN TO HINDER THE TRAVEL OF UK CITIZENS HOLDING VALID
YAR VISAS.

2. SUBJECT EMBASSY SANAA'S VIEWS, WE PREPARED SUPPORT
UK DEMARCHE AND SO INFORMED REEVE. US OPPOSES INCLUSION
OF ARABIC IN PASSPORTS AS THIS CONTRARY TO INTERNATIONAL
PRACTICE AND UN RECOMMENDATIONS AND WOULD CREATE
TREMENDOUS TECHNICAL AND ADMINISTRATIVE PROBLEMS. IT
COULD ALSO OPEN PANDORA'S BOX OF PROBLEMS RESULTING
FROM INDIVIDUAL COUNTRIES DEMANDING THAT THEIR LANGUAGE
BE INCLUDED IN PASSPORT OF ANY TRAVELER COMING TO THEIR
COUNTRY.

3. WE CONCERNED THAT SHOULD YARG STICK TO ITS REQUEST
AND OTHER COUNTRIES ACCEDE TO IT, OUR UNWILLINGNESS TO
ACCEPT YAR REQUIREMENT COULD BECOME IRRITANT IN BILATERAL
RELATIONS, POSSIBLY ULTIMATELY AFFECTING OPERATION OF
EMBASSY, AS WAS CASE IN LIBYA. REQUEST EMBASSY APPROACH
BRITISH AND REPORT ON RELATIVE SERIOUSNESS OF YAR
INTENTION TO ENFORCE ARABIC REQUIREMENT, AS WELL AS ANY
COMMENTS ON JOINT APPROACH WITH UK. IF, AS WE SUSPECT,
CREAKY YARG ADMINISTRATIVE APPARATUS HAS NOT YET GOTTEN
CIRCULAR TO ALL MISSIONS, COULD IMMEDIATE US-UK DEMARCHE
TO FOREIGN MINISTER NU'MAN LEAD TO CIRCULAR'S WITHDRAWAL?
AT MINIMUM, YARG SHOULD BE ASKED NOT TO PUBLICIZE DEMAND,
PENDING DISCUSSIONS. OUR FEAR IS THAT IF YARG DEMAND
MADE PUBLIC, OTHER ARAB STATES COULD FOLLOW SUIT.

4. WE WOULD BE INTERESTED TO LEARN IF YARG CIRCULAR
RESULT OF LIBYAN INITIATIVE. FYI US AGREEMENT TO PLACE
ARABIC STAMP IN PASSPORTS OF US PERSONNEL GOING TO LIBYA
WAS MADE PRIMARILY IN ORDER TO KEEP EMBASSY TRIPOLI
OPEN. END FYI. IF YARG RAISES US ACCEPTANCE OF USE OF
ARABIC FOR LIBYA AS A PRECEDENT, WE WOULD PLAN TO RESPOND
THAT THIS ONLY A TEMPORARY MEASURE RESULTING FROM PAR-
TICULAR CIRCUMSTANCES AND THAT OUR POLICY REMAINS TO
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SUPPORT 1963 ROME CONFERENCE RECOMMENDATIONS.

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